



**UNG** | UNIVERSITY *of*  
NORTH GEORGIA™

NIGHTHAWK ENGAGEMENT AND STUDENT TRANSITIONS

**PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT  
(PLA)  
STUDENT HANDBOOK**

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## **Preface**

This handbook provides students with the information needed when seeking credit for prior learning related to specific courses at the University of North Georgia. The handbook is also available online via the [UNG website](#).

For more information about PLA at UNG, contact:

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# Prior Learning Assessment

## ***Definition of Prior Learning***

Prior learning is learning gained through life or work outside of structured higher educational courses. Many people learn through their experiences in life, such as those in professional endeavors (through business, the military, or other work/training experiences) or other educational experiences (through community work, family, travel, or personal study).

## ***Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)***

PLA is a process through which students **identify** relevant learning areas from their past experiences, **demonstrate** that learning through appropriate documentation, and **submit** their materials to be assessed and possibly awarded academic credit relative to specific course objectives at UNG.

## ***Earning College Credit for Prior Learning***

One of the goals of college-level education is to prepare responsible, reflective citizens who adapt constructively to change. College-level education also helps students become critical thinkers and problem-solvers in an ever-changing world.

Students can acquire learning from various sources outside the traditional classroom, and they can earn appropriate credit in their work towards a degree for verifiable college-level learning acquired through life or work experience, not for the experience itself. Students who acquire the level of knowledge that meets the expectations and the learning outcomes of a specific course may get credit for that course, provided they can demonstrate proficiency in that specific course.

The University of North Georgia awards Credit by Examination (CBE) when scores on nationally standardized examinations (CLEP, DSST, FLATS) or other academic experience strongly indicates that the student has acquired the information or skills related to given courses of instruction offered by the university.

In evaluating student submissions for possible credit, the university utilizes the American Council on Education (ACE) principles, a national association of higher education institutions. ACE serves adult learners by evaluating and translating workplace learning and non-traditional education experiences into academic credits, and armed services members by evaluating and recommending equivalent college credits for military training and experience.

Credit awarded by examination can be given only for courses officially approved for academic credit by the university. The credit (noted with a grade of K) carries no academic grade and is not computed into the grade point average. The university limits the number of hours of Credit by Examination to 45 semester hours to a bachelor's degree. No more than 30 hours of credit by exam credit may be applied to an associate degree program.

A student who has earned a grade other than a W in the course may not earn CLEP, DSST or other exam credit for the course. A student may earn CLEP, DSST or other exam credit for a course in which he/she is currently enrolled provided that the student withdraws from the course no later than the last date in the term to withdraw with a W. Students should be aware that medical, dental, and other professional schools may not recognize course credit by examination in their admissions processes.

### ***Methods of Assessing Prior Learning for College Credit***

1. **Departmental Examination.** Students currently enrolled who present satisfactory evidence that they are knowledgeable in a particular subject may receive credit by an approved departmental examination developed and administered by the appropriate instructional department. Satisfactory evidence may be but is not limited to work experience, non-credit courses, coursework was taken at non-accredited institutions or military courses. The head of the instructional department offering the course must give permission; however, exams will not be permitted in courses for which a student has previously taken an exam for credit or was previously enrolled at UNG as a regular or audit student. (For more information, consult the [UNG Catalog](#).)
2. **National Standardized Examination.** Credit for prior learning may be awarded through College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Advanced Placement (AP) credit, Dantes Subject Standardized Tests (DSST), Foreign Language Achievement Testing Service (FLATS), and International Baccalaureate Program (IB) (further explanation is available in the [UNG Catalog](#)).

- **CLEP (College Level Examination Program) Credit**

**College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams** are ninety-minutes (except the College Composition Exam, which is 120 minutes) available in five general areas and twenty-nine subject areas for students interested in earning college credit for the material they already know. Criteria for credit awarded for CLEP subject examinations, minimum scores, and credit is given may be found on page 12 of this handbook or for more detailed information, go to the UNG Testing website for [CLEP](#). CLEP credit will be indicated by a "K" grade on the student's transcript.

- **DSST (Dantes Subject Standardized Tests) Credit**

The Dantes Subject Standardized Tests (DSST), formerly DANES, is a national credit by examination program recognized by the American Council on Education. The DSST tests are two-hour computer-based tests available in business, physical sciences, humanities, social sciences, and applied technology, and are for students interested in earning college credit for the material they already know. For more information on the DSST program, study guides, and practice exams, please visit the official [DSST website](#). UNG is an open DSST Testing Center. The [UNG DSST website](#) lists the credit awarded criteria for DSST subject examinations, minimum scores, and the number of credit hours given. DSST credit will be

indicated by a "K" grade on the student's transcript. For a list of courses for which credit is available by DSST Credit, please see page 14 of this handbook.

- **Foreign Language Achievement Testing Services (FLATS)**

Students may earn academic credit in select foreign languages through the Foreign Language Achievement Testing Service (FLATS) offered by Brigham Young University (BYU). FLATS credit may not be earned for languages currently offered through the UNG Department of English and Foreign Languages. However, the list of FLATS testing options is extensive. The student must contact the UNG Testing Office by telephone or e-mail before registering for a FLATS test via the BYU website. The UNG Testing Office will provide the FLATS Registration Guide outlining how to proceed with the testing process. FLATS credit will be indicated by a "K" grade on the student's transcript. For more information, please visit [UNG's FLATS website](#).

3. **American Council on Education (ACE).** The American Council on Education (ACE) is an organization that provides an evaluation of programs and transcripts for training taken by specific employers, a specialized training provider, or during a military career. ACE evaluations guide colleges and universities on the acceptance of credit. UNG evaluates these transcripts and honors ACE credit as appropriate for the program of study for students.

A list of employers that participate in the ACE College Credit Recommendation Service can be found at the [ACE CREDIT website](#). Transcripts for military personnel can be requested through the [Joint Services Transcript website](#).

4. **Portfolio Assessment.** Students use the PLA portfolio development process to document their prior learning when credit by examination for a relevant course is not available. This process requires students to prepare and submit a collection of documents that establish and support their claim that they have specific relevant skills, knowledge, values, attitudes, understandings, achievements, experiences, competencies, training, and certifications aligned with specific course objectives.

## **PLA PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT**

If prospective students have learning experiences applicable for course credit, and departmental or standardized examinations are not an option, they may be advised to consider prior learning assessment by portfolio.

### ***Courses available for PLA Portfolio credit***

A student may request consideration for PLA Portfolio credit for any course in the UNG Catalog, but the eligibility for portfolio credit is not guaranteed. Traditional instructional methods are deemed more appropriate for specific courses, and portfolio credit is not optimal for all courses.

### ***Courses NOT available for PLA Portfolio credit***

Courses available for completion through CLEP, departmental examination, FLATS, and DSST methods of earning credit will not be eligible for credit through the portfolio process. Also, courses for which the student has already registered for are not eligible unless the student withdraws from the course no later than the last date in the term to withdraw with a W.

### ***PLA Portfolio Development***

Students use the PLA portfolio development process to document their prior learning. This process requires students to prepare and submit a collection of documents that establish and support their claim that they have specific relevant skills, knowledge, values, attitudes, understandings, achievements, experiences, competencies, training, and certifications aligned with specific course objectives. The portfolio developed should not only describe the relevant experience but should also identify the particular learning outcomes.

Students must also offer a critical self-assessment of what college-level learning has been acquired through selected non-traditional experience. This experience might include various work, training, reading and research, civil and military service, or life learning.

Once students complete and submit the PLA portfolio, assessors will evaluate it to determine if the portfolio provides evidence which ties those skills to a specific course objective. If the portfolio does so, credit may be awarded when assessors determine that the prior learning is acceptable for credit. A separate portfolio must be prepared for each course for which a student is seeking credit.

## VETERANS AND CURRENT MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS

The University of North Georgia is committed to helping veterans and current military personnel take full advantage of their eligible benefits from the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#). Students seeking VA educational benefits should contact the [UNG Financial Aid Department](#).

In addition to UNG resources, veterans and military service members are encouraged to explore the educational opportunities available through the [University System of Georgia](#).

Veterans and current military personnel may take advantage of the Military Evaluations Program conducted by the American Council on Education (ACE) for service school courses. For further information, see the [ACE Military Programs website](#).

### ***Additional Resources:***

- Veterans may be eligible for military-funded [CLEP](#) or [DSST](#) exams.
- For a list of military benefits by state, go to the [US Army website](#).



## UNIVERSITY OF NORTH GEORGIA PLA PORTFOLIO POLICIES

1. Prospective students who fit the following criteria may be eligible to earn course credit via PLA by Portfolio:
  - ✚ They are adult learners (23 and older)
  - ✚ They have other learning experiences outside a traditional college curriculum
2. Course credit via PLA by portfolio may not replace existing credit assessments available through CLEP, departmental examination, DSST, or FLATS.
3. Courses for which a student has already earned a grade (including a grade of "K" or "V" (audit)) or for which a student is currently registered are not eligible for PLA credit.
4. The departments responsible for grading individual portfolios determine the grading timeline for the portfolios. Portfolios submitted three weeks before the end of the semester or later are assessed the next semester. Faculty assessors will assign grades by the end of the semester unless otherwise notified.
5. Credit may be awarded after the first submission of the portfolio, in which case the student will be notified that credit has been granted. The assessor will submit a signed and completed PLA Credit Approval Form to the PLA Counselor. This form must be approved and signed by the assessor's department chair before being sent to the Registrar's Office for posting on the student's academic record. The course or courses for which students have successfully earned PLA by Portfolio credit will be noted on the transcript with a letter grade of "K." These "K" grades will not be calculated into the student's grade point average (GPA). However, credit hours earned through examination may be counted as attempted hours for financial aid purposes. For more information concerning financial aid, please contact the [Financial Aid Office](#).
6. A qualified faculty assessor will evaluate the PLA portfolio submission to determine if the portfolio provides evidence which ties those skills to a specific course objective. If the assessor deems a portfolio "unsatisfactory," the assessor may specifically outline areas for improvement and encourage students to resubmit their documentation one time during the next semester. The assessors will provide a report giving specific feedback to students. Students are permitted to resubmit their portfolio only one time for any given course.
7. A maximum of 45 semester hours for Bachelor students and 30 semester hours for Associate students may be earned through any combination of CLEP, IB, DSST, FLATS, AP, departmental examination, or PLA by portfolio credit. Students should also work with the PLA counselor and their academic advisor to determine any additional requirements they may need to consider.
8. Individual departments determine how many, if any, PLA credits may be awarded toward a degree program.
9. Appeal Process: Students may appeal an unsatisfactory grade on a resubmitted portfolio. Students wishing to appeal an assigned grade should contact the Vice Provost for [Academic Affairs](#).

10. Time Limit Policy: Students have up to two semesters to complete PLA by portfolio for a particular course. Students may have one additional semester if it becomes necessary to resubmit an unsatisfactory portfolio.

## **Role Expectations: PLA COUNSELOR, FACULTY ASSESSOR, AND STUDENT**

### ***Role of the PLA Counselor***

Students who believe that they may have prior learning that can be used for academic credit should schedule an appointment with the PLA Counselor who will work with them to determine if the portfolio documentation process is appropriate. To schedule an appointment with Christy Orr, PLA Counselor, please see her contact information on page 3 of this document.

### ***Role of the Faculty Assessor***

Faculty assessors help determine appropriate courses based on backgrounds of students in concert with the PLA Counselor. Faculty develop assessment methods appropriate for the course, provide syllabus and assessment guidelines, and evaluate student portfolios.

Faculty assessors should develop course syllabi and course instructions that allow students to complete PLA by portfolio as a self-directed study. Faculty should be available to provide clarification of course expectations or instructions. However, faculty members are not expected to teach the course in the manner of an independent study.

### ***Role of the Student in the PLA process***

Students must provide evidence to the Faculty Assessor and the PLA Counselor that they have relevant learning experiences aligned with learning outcomes for the target course. Obtaining course credit through the PLA process is not equivalent to a faculty-directed independent study. Instead, PLA by portfolio is a process by which students evaluate prior learning experiences and demonstrate appropriate learning outcomes relevant to specific courses. Thus, students must meet a minimum of 70% of the course syllabus's expectations.

## CLEP Credits Granted by UNG

\*This CLEP Subject Examination does not satisfy the Georgia History or the Georgia Constitution requirements.

\*\*This passing score is higher than the ACE recommended score to grant upper-level credit.

† This CLEP Subject Examination will satisfy the US Constitution requirement.

‡ This CLEP Subject Examination will satisfy the US History requirement.

CLEP Subject Examination	Acceptable CLEP Scaled Courses	UNG Course(s) Credited
Accounting, Financial	50	ACCT 2101
American Government*†	50	POLS 1101
American Literature	50	ENGL 2131 or 2132
Analyzing and Interpreting Literature	50	ENGL 1102
Biology, General	50	BIOL 1107K & BIOL 1108K
Business Law, Introductory	50	BUSA 2810
	63	BUSA 2810 & BUSA 3810
Calculus	50	MATH 1450
Chemistry	50	CHEM 1211 & 1211L
	55	CHEM 1211, 1211L, 1212, & 1212L
College Algebra	50	MATH 1111
College Composition	50	ENGL 1101
Educational Psychology, Intro	50	EDUC 3001
English Literature	50	ENGL 2121 or 2122
French Language, College Level	44	FREN 1001
	50	FREN 1001 & 1002
	51	FREN 1001, 1002, & 2001
	59	FREN 1001, 1002, 2001, & 2002
German Language, College Level	45	GRMN 1001
	50	GRMN 1001 & 1002
	54	GRMN 1001, 1002, & 2001
	60	GRMN 1001, 1002, 2001, & 2002

<b>CLEP Subject Examination</b>	<b>Acceptable CLEP Scaled Courses</b>	<b>UNG Course(s) Credited</b>
History of the United States I*‡	50	HIST 2111
History of the United States II*‡	50	HIST 2112
Human Growth and Development	50	PSYC 2103
Macroeconomics, Principles of	50	ECON 2105
Management, Principles of	52**	MGMT 3661
Marketing, Principles of	55**	MKTG 3700
Microeconomics, Principles of	50	ECON 2106
Precalculus	50	MATH 1113
Psychology, Introductory	50	PSYC 1101
Sociology, Introductory	50	SOCI 1101
Spanish Language, College Level	45	SPAN 1001
	50	SPAN 1001 & 1002
	56	SPAN 1001, 1002, & 2001
	63	SPAN 1001, 1002, 2001, & 2002
Western Civilization I	50	HIST 1121 or 2200
Western Civilization II	50	Hist 1122 or 2201

## DANTES (DSST) Credits granted by UNG

DANTES Subject Examination	Acceptable Examination Scores	UNG Course(s) Credited
<b>BUSINESS</b>		
Introduction to Business	46/400	BUSA 1105
Personal Finance	46	ECON 1502
Introduction to Computing	45/400	CSCI 1100 and 1150
<b>HUMANITIES</b>		
Principles of Public Speaking	47	COMM 1110
Introduction to World Religions	48/400	RELG 2860 or HIST 2860
Ethics in America	46/400	PHIL 2200
<b>MATHEMATICS &amp; SCIENCE</b>		
Fundamentals of College Algebra	47/400	MATH 1111
Environment & Humanity	46	ESCI 1105
Principles of Statistics	48/400	MATH 2400
<b>SOCIAL SCIENCES</b>		
A History of the Vietnam War	44	HIST 4660
Civil War & Reconstruction	47	HIST 3180
Criminal Justice	49/400	CRJU 1100
Foundations of Education	46	EDUC 2110
General Anthropology	47	ANTH 1102
Human/Cultural Geography	48	GEOG 1101
Introduction to Law Enforcement	45	CRJU 2002
Lifespan Developmental Psychology	46	PSYC 2103

## NOTES